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4ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE KSTHE BALTIMORE SUN  
13 December 1981*Beyond Mere Spying**In the CIA We Trust*

Washington.

ALL Right-Thinking Citizens will join me in hoping: (A) that Colonel Muammar-Kadafi did not really send a hit team to assassinate high American officials, and (B) that if he did, the assassins will be stymied in their mission.

Whether All Right-Thinking Citizens will go a step further with me, to examine the timing and manner of the administration's hints about this

By Ernest B. Furgurson

threat, is not so certain. That involves a level of skepticism that comes naturally to a newspaperman, but history demonstrates that to laymen skepticism sometimes seems unpatriotic.

The administration has been trying since it moved in to set up the Central Intelligence Agency in domestic spying and dirty tricks, two enthusiasms allowed the KGB in the Soviet Union but formally denied our own spies here at home. The law creating the CIA 34 years ago specified that its mission would be abroad, while the FBI would take care of security inside the country. We had a whiff during Operation Chaos of what happens when such agencies are encouraged to operate beyond their stated franchises.

The administration's rationale for wanting to turn the CIA loose at home is the rise of international terrorism. Mr. Reagan was barely sworn in when he welcomed the Tehran hostages with a speech promising "swift and effective retribution" against such crimes. Terrorists "are willing to pay the price," he said, but "we have every interest in raising the price."

At the first meeting of the National Security Council after inauguration, terrorism was at the top of the agenda. Shortly after, Secretary of State Alexander Haig asserted that "International terrorism will take the place of human rights in our concern, because it is the ultimate abuse of human rights." He laid responsibility for terrorism on the Soviet Union—a thesis elaborated by Claire Sterling in her book, "The Terror Network," published in April.

Just about the time this talk peaked, the administration circulated a set of revised intelligence guidelines that would give the CIA license to do a lot of things to U.S. citizens that it

was forbidden to do under existing rules. Although such authorities as Edwin Meese, the president's counselor, asserted that there was no intention of putting the CIA into domestic spying, that is just what the changes would have done. A substantial uproar ensued, and the proposals were held back—until this month.

Terrorism moved to the back burner for months while the administration focused on strategic matters like missiles in Europe. Then in October there were reports that our ambassador in Rome was an assassination target. More rumors flew. Eventually they centered here, and the administration confirmed that an informant had said Libya had sent a crew to take out the president and/or his highest aides.

And just about the time this talk peaked, the president signed the executive order putting the CIA into domestic spying. The public relations aspect of it worked beautifully; most congressional intelligence committee members hailed this final version because they compared it to last spring's draft rather than to existing rules.

Compared to that first draft, the order was indeed more restrictive. But compared to what was authorized before, it confers on the CIA the kind of geographically unlimited license that its rival, the KGB, has enjoyed. It goes beyond mere spying—it authorizes CIA covert actions in this country, and permits infiltration and subversion of foreign-dominated organizations in this country. There are specified conditions for these operations, but defining them is up to the president's own appointees.

The message here, after this skeptical look at the timing of the terrorism scares and the CIA announcements, is not to doubt that terrorists may be stalking high U.S. officials. If they are, one prays that the FBI and other legitimate domestic police agencies, using information from the CIA where pertinent, will stop them.

The message instead is that in the current climate of fearfulness, official Washington has accepted the new CIA guidelines much too passively. The congressmen charged with intelligence oversight have failed their assignment. Under the new rules, only the trustworthiness of the incumbent administration—this one, the next one, whichever—stands between the American people and their own domestic KGB.